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Mr. Bernard Ebbers
Chairman
WorldCom
515 East Amite
Jackson, MS 39201

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Bernie:

You may or may not remember me from a deal completed a few years ago. But I submit that it behooves you and WorldCom to remember the following story.

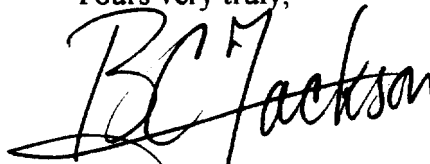
My company is a WorldCom customer. On 2nd March 1998 we contacted your customer service staff to order certain changes in our service. The order was confirmed in writing a few days later. Here is a summary of the order and WorldCom's "performance."

Add two new lines	WorldCom did not perform. Once we were desperate for the lines we contacted Bell Atlantic; we had our new lines installed and working <u>28 hours later.</u>
Establish a new account	Completed on 4/17/98, <u>1½ months after the order.</u>
Change the "hunt" groups	Completed on 5/14/98, <u>2½ months after the order.</u>
Change directory listings	Completed on 6/25/98; <u>3¾ months after the order</u>

The completion of this work required countless follow-up calls from us. We spent many hours chasing your people. We were passed around to at least four different agents, each of whom was very nice but most of whom were totally ineffectual in helping us.

In the world of mega-mergers there is much talk of anti-competitive effect, etc., etc. But the real problem with WorldCom is that it doesn't seem to be able to provide simple services to its customers. And we are not alone in our experience, as I found out by reading the enclosed *Wall Street Journal* article.

Yours very truly,



Bruce Carver Jackson
President

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List A B C D E

Inside One Company's Telephone Snafu

By STEPHANIE N. MEHTA

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — When DFI International, a tiny research and consulting firm, decided to switch all of its phone services to a single provider, it turned to WorldCom Inc. The fast-growing communications giant offered a convenient package of local, long-distance, Internet and other services. And the entrepreneurial managers at DFI liked WorldCom's style.

"It was this young, brash, upstart company that I so admired," recalls Brett Lambert, a DFI vice president.

But Mr. Lambert's admiration soon turned into frustration and bitterness. In the 4½ months since WorldCom has been DFI's communications supplier, the consulting company says it has experienced nearly every flavor of communications breakdown, including telephones that don't receive incoming calls, blocked Internet access and long-distance lines that don't work. DFI says WorldCom even gave directory assistance the wrong phone number for it.

WorldCom, already one of the largest telecom carriers in the U.S. and about to acquire MCI Communications Corp. for \$37 billion, acknowledges that DFI experienced problems with its service but declines to comment specifically on DFI's complaints. It does attribute part of the problem to a "miscommunication" between WorldCom and DFI about the firm's move to a new location. "We're not perfect," says spokeswoman Terri Howell. But we feel this was a very unusual situation."

In fact, DFI's troubles might just as easily have been caused by any telephone company. The saga illustrates the many challenges that companies face today buying telephone services. The new, competitive telecommunications environment has brought business customers more choice, but that means more bewildering complexity.

Buyer Beware

Things to keep in mind when your company switches phone service.

- **Don't switch all your lines at once.**
Keep several with your current carrier to give you backup service in case the new provider falters.
- **Meet the provider's technical team.**
Ask technicians to examine your site to ensure they can install everything their sales staff promised.

- **Learn the lingo.**
You don't want to end up buying a robust "T-1" line if all you really need is 24 plain-vanilla phone lines.
- **Check your rates.**
Don't assume your new carrier is offering the best prices, especially for long distance.

When DFI moved into its new office here on Dec. 6, it fully expected WorldCom to have installed the telecommunications equipment it had ordered. Instead, it says, it found its telecommunications closet empty. "We couldn't even call WorldCom to complain, because we didn't have phone service," Mr. Lambert says, though he adds that he was able to get through using his cellular phone.

The problems didn't stop there. DFI says it asked WorldCom to install two T-1 lines, which are robust digital lines that can handle large streams of voice and data traffic. But WorldCom initially reserved only one such line for DFI, and it was a line intended primarily for data. DFI employees, working with WorldCom technicians, were able to rig the line to accept voice calls, but only by using a makeshift version of call-forwarding.

The hookup did mean the company was able to get some incoming calls by mid-December. But clients still had a hard time reaching DFI, partly because directory assistance was giving out the wrong number. Those who had the right number often heard fast busy signals when they tried to get through.

"If I wasn't so entrenched as a customer, I would have gone someplace else. I

just couldn't get ahold of them," says E. Scott Blackwell, a vice president at XL Vision Inc., which hires DFI to do research. He says he began resorting to calling DFI executives at home when he needed to talk business.

In mid-January, DFI says it started receiving a lot of incoming calls, but they were for other companies. "The first time it happened, we were all just praying it was one wrong number," says Jeff Abramson, a DFI employee who spent a day fielding calls intended for a law firm and a real-estate office. "After a while, we just got attuned to expecting things to go wrong."

Mr. Abramson says he was surprised to discover how fragile and quirky communications systems can be. "We hear a lot about technology and telecommunications improvements," he says. "But if these [technical] guys don't install the right card in your system, all your great capabilities aren't going to work."

DFI says WorldCom was unresponsive to its problems at first and then sent technicians who weren't trained to handle the service outages DFI described. The biggest insult, DFI officials say: WorldCom sent a bill, dated Christmas Day,

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Some Lessons Learned Inside a Phone Snafu At a Small Company

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threatening to discontinue service if DFI didn't pay \$355.78. At that point, the officials insist, DFI didn't have service to lose.

When a WorldCom sales representative sent the firm a holiday fruit basket wishing the company "a better New Year," presumably seeking to make amends, DFI employees sent the basket back — to John Sidgmore, WorldCom's chief operating officer.

WorldCom says it was responsive to DFI's complaints, adding that it devoted "additional resources" to fix the problem. "We're committed to satisfying the customer," says Ms. Howell, the WorldCom spokeswoman. "It is in our best interests and it is in the customer's best interest to have these issues resolved as quickly as possible."

Yet problems persist. DFI says it still doesn't receive all its incoming calls. (It hears about the problem later from clients who eventually get through.) And it's still having billing problems.

But Mr. Lambert and his crew say they are smarter now about handling service problems. Someone from DFI watches as the technicians make repairs. They take detailed notes. And they don't hesitate to call WorldCom supervisors at home.

In retrospect, Mr. Lambert says he probably should have retained some business with Bell Atlantic Corp., DFI's original local carrier, or split the new contract among a few vendors. He says he also didn't ask enough questions up front, despite the fact that he was initially skeptical that the sales representative would deliver all he promised.

WorldCom says word of DFI's problem has made it to the highest levels of the company's Jackson, Miss., headquarters, even reaching the company's CEO, Bernard L. Ebbers.

But DFI says that's as it should be. After all, says Mr. Lambert, "I'd want to know if our customers were being treated like we were."